

Troops Help Clinic, Deliver School Supplies

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By U.S. Army Spc. Matthew Wester
3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division

TAJI, Iraq, May 18, 2005 — Hundreds of excited children gathered near a clinic as U.S. soldiers passed out school supplies, book bags and toys during a humanitarian mission to the Husseinia section of northwest Baghdad near Camp Taji on May 7.

Inside the clinic, another group of troops unloaded boxes of medical supplies as Army medical professionals consulted with their Iraqi counterparts.

Soldiers of the 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, serving as part of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division; 3rd Infantry Division and supporting units conducted the mission, a large part of which included delivering medicine, vaccines, bandages and vitamins to the Husseinia clinic.

"About two weeks ago we identified what the facility needed in regards to medical supplies and training," said U.S. Army Capt. Marc Pelini, effects coordinator for the 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

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After dropping off the supplies, Army medical personnel were on hand to show the Husseinia clinic's staff how to properly use the supplies, Pelini said.

Army personnel were also on hand to offer guidance to Iraqi doctors and assess whether past guidance had helped the efficiency of the clinic.

"We came back to assess whether they had taken our recommendations, and they had," said Capt. Eva-Marie Austin, the 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division's medical planner from Catonsville, Md. "They've stocked certain things in the pharmacy, and they've made improvements here."



U.S. Army Dr. (Col.) John Lammie examines an Iraqi woman's eyes during a mission to Husseinia, Iraq, May 7, 2005. Lammie consulted with Iraqi medical staff members about treatment for the woman. "I've met a lot of tremendously capable colleagues on the Iraqi side," he said. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Matthew Wester

"I've met a lot of tremendously capable colleagues on the Iraqi side," said Dr. (Col.) John Lammie, of 550th Area Support Medical Company, 3rd Infantry Division and senior physician on Camp Taji. "My hope is that we can get them the infrastructure and be able to provide them with the tools to do the job they know how to do."

As the Army doctors met with the clinic's workers, neighborhood kids shrugged off the afternoon heat and crowded around a humvee, eventually forming a line to receive backpacks, notebooks, pencils, soccer balls and toys.

"Everybody needs school supplies," said Spc. Kris A. Zientara, of B company 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion and a Utica, N.Y., native. "It was a little hectic, but it turned out alright. We try our best to organize and go from there."

"They know we're working for them, and they're very appreciative," he said.

The crowd continued to grow as the soldiers made sure every child got something.

"The turnout was good," said Sgt. Michael J. Glenn, from Lacey, N.J., also a member of B Company. "Once we open the trunk, they come from everywhere."

"The reception we've gotten here, no matter what the operation is, has been good," he said.

Glenn said the wider civil affairs mission in Husseinia includes distributing needed supplies, but will also focus on improving sewage systems and infrastructure for the area.

The focus of the medical part of the mission was support, with Iraqi medical practitioners taking responsibility for providing the healthcare to their own people, and Army personnel helping to get them the supplies and organization they need.

"We're doing things behind the scenes, and we're letting the Iraqis treat their people in the way they believe is the best way to treat them," Pelini said.



U.S. Army Spc. Kris A. Zientara hands out toys to children in Husseinia, Iraq, May 7, 2005. "They know we're working for them and they're really appreciative," the Utica, N.Y. native said. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Matthew Wester

"We're here to help them get back on their feet," he said.

The children smiled gratefully after receiving the items from the civil affairs soldiers.

The adults in the community were positive about the visit as well.

Lammie described the people he dealt with during the mission as polite and receptive.

Austin agreed.

"This is a very positive area. The people have received us well, have been very respectful" she said. "Overall, it's been a good experience."